ihcda
Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority

The Annual Homeless Assessment Report
Instructions for Ensuring Accurate AHAR Data

About The AHAR

Every year the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) submits an Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. This is the most comprehensive annual report on homelessness in the United States. The report provides year-to-year trend information that explores changes in the patterns of homelessness over time.

Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) submits data for the Balance of State (all parts of Indiana except Marion County and South Bend, which are responsible for their own reports). Data is pulled from the HMIS system for all Emergency Shelter (ES) and Transitional Housing (TH) programs. This year's report will look at data from October 1st, 2008 through September 30th, 2009. The first draft of the AHAR report is due December 15th, 2009 and the final draft is due January 15th, 2009. A second version of the AHAR that only looks at homeless veterans will be submitted in February.

Participation in the AHAR is one of the elements that communities are scored on in the Continuum of Care (COC) application for federal funding, known as the Notice of Funds Available (NOFA). If our score on the NOFA application is high enough all of our existing programs will receive funding and we will secure extra funding for new projects, usually in the form of Permanent Supportive Housing programs. Our success with the AHAR report is a large factor in how well the Balance of State will score on the NOFA application.

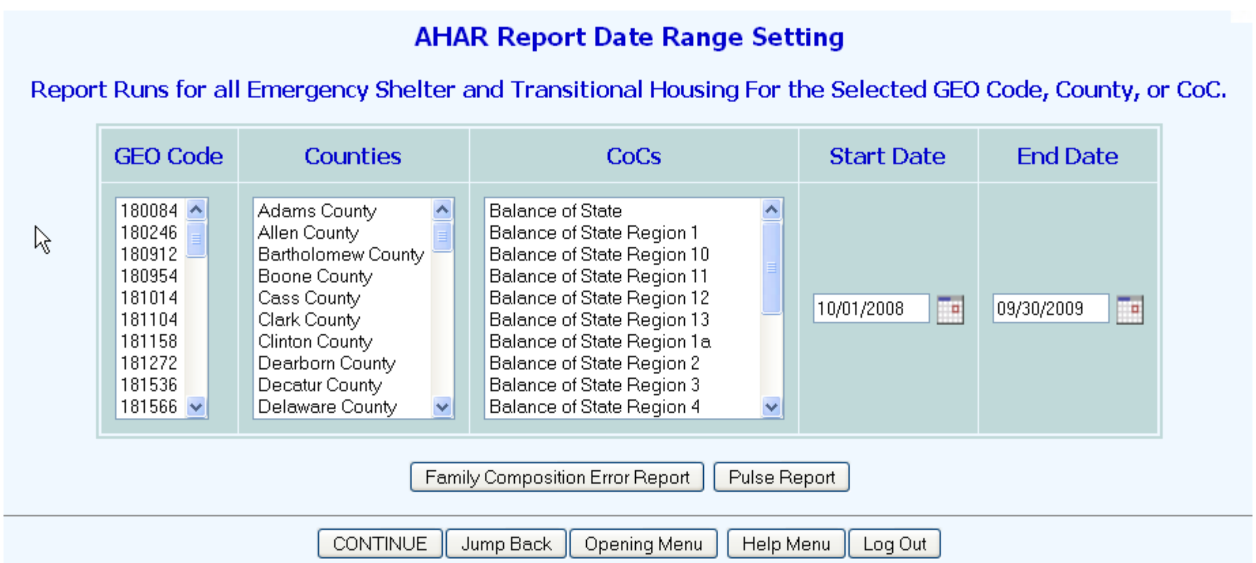
The AHAR is broken down into four sections known as table shells. The four sections are: (1)Emergency Shelter programs that serve Individuals, (2)Emergency Shelter programs that serve Families, (3)Transitional Housing programs that serve Individuals, and (4)Transitional Housing programs that serve Families. Programs that serve both individuals and families will have their client's data split into the two appropriate categories. In the AHAR a family is denoted as having one person over the age of 18 and at least one person under the age of 18. So, two adults who enter as a couple are treated as two individuals. In HMIS,family data is pulled from the Household and Child Information Form on the Face Sheet.

In order for a table shell to be included in the national AHAR report at least 50% of that type of beds in the Balance of State must be participating in HMIS. The participation rate is determined from the Housing Inventory Chart that is filled out by each Continuum in January. This is why it's important for communities to encourage all shelters to participate in the HMIS. For example, if a large Emergency Shelter program is unable to participate in HMIS that could cause our participation rate statewide to dip below 50% and our entire statewide data would not be useable in AHAR. In addition to having at least 50% of beds participate in HMIS, we must also demonstrate that on average at least 65% of the beds in that category were occupied. This is why it's important to make sure all family members are entered into HMIS correctly. The more table shells that we are able to submit; the higher our score will be in the next NOFA application. Finally, the more accurate our data is and the less missing data we have, the better we will do with the AHAR. All of this translates into more funding for homeless services to Hoosiers in distress.

It is **imperative** for all ES and TH programs to look at their data and ensure that all clients have been entered and all information is complete and accurate. The following pages will explain how to run the AHAR report and how to ensure that your data is complete and accurate.

Running the AHAR Report

The AHAR Report is found under the Fiscal/Program Menu. The "Fiscal/Program" button lives in the Administration Section of the Opening Menu. If you do not have the Fiscal/Program button, please send a message to the Help Desk. Once you're in the Fiscal Program menu, click on "AHAR Reports". You'll be presented with this screen:



The date range for the report is already filled in. In addition to running the AHAR report some users will see a button for a Family Composition Error Report and/or a Pulse Report, but those are not important for running the AHAR.

Every program is assigned to a GEO code representing a geographic area (a particular county or city). You will only see the GEO codes listed that are associated with your programs. Highlight one or all of the GEO codes and press "Continue" to run the report.

You will then be presented with the AHAR report combining data for all programs found within the GEO Codes or Counties that you selected. Note: You are only able to run the AHAR report for programs which you have access to. For more users this will just be the programs at your agency. For Continuum of Care Leaders with a Local COC Admin account you will be able to run the AHAR for all programs in your jurisdiction.

The report is broken down into four columns representing each type of program, as shown below.

AHAR Report 10/01/2008 to 09/30/2009 for County: TEST County

Homeless Shelter Program (ES-R0-00)

	Emergency Shelter-Individual	Emergency Shelter-Family	Transitional Housing-Individual	Transitional Housing-Family
Unduplicated persons who used this type of housing	8	4	0	0
Persons who used more than one provider of this type	0	0	0	0
Persons using this housing type on average night	3	1	0	0
Persons using this housing type on 10/29/2008	2	0	0	0

There are a few things to pay attention to as you scroll through this report.

First, make sure your clients are being counted in the correct columns. If you run a family shelter that only serves mothers with children, but some of your clients are listed in the Individual column, then that most likely means some of your families are missing children's detail. I'll explain how to correct mistakes later on.

Second, make sure the numbers make sense. Does the unduplicated count sound right? Do the number of people on each given sample night sound accurate? These numbers are what we use to calculate the Utilization Rate of a program. For example, if your program has 100 beds for Individuals and the AHAR reports you had 50 persons using this housing type on an average night, then your utilization rate is 50%. Utilization rates below 65% or above 105% are flagged and require explanation. For family shelters the utilization rate is calculated based on the number of beds you have available. So if you're shelter has 5 rooms with 4 beds in each room then your capacity is 20 family beds. If all 5 rooms are full but each room only has two people in it (perhaps a mother and one child) then only 10 of your beds will be full and you'll be listed at 50% capacity on the AHAR.

Third, check for any missing data. You won't be able to make any corrections here, but you'll know that you have a problem if you find any rows that have numbers next to "Missing This Information".

Finally, make sure all the numbers make sense. If your program serves only Chronically Homeless individuals but the question on Disabling Condition shows several people with no disability then that could be a potential error.

After reviewing the AHAR report we're now ready to examine the data more closely and find out where any problems may be.

Finding Potential Data Quality Problems

There are two reports that you can run to find potential data quality problems, the Program Profile Report and the Demographics Report. It's often helpful to run both reports and print them out for comparison.

Both of these reports are found under the "Profile" menu. You should run these reports for one program at a time.

Program Profile Report

To run the Program Profile Report, first select “Roster History” and change the dates to 10/1/2008 to 9/30/2009 so that it matches the AHAR Report. Then click the button labeled “Program Profile Report.” On the next page, make sure that All Clients is selected along with “Display Household Members”, for “Complete History”, sorted by Client, with Individual Details (these should all be the default settings). Press “Continue” to run the report.

There a few things to look for on the Program Profile Report.

First, for any program that serves families, this report will show you the name of all household members in italics underneath the head of household. In the example below, James is the head of household and Sara is a member of his household. If you do not see any names listed in italics then that person will be counted as an Individual on the AHAR report, even if you marked them as a family on the Intake Screen.

2.	James Caan *Sara Caan*	813-45-2342	10/15/2008	10/21/2008	6 + *1*	03/26/1940
.		813-45-2342	05/05/2009		149 + *1*	03/26/1940

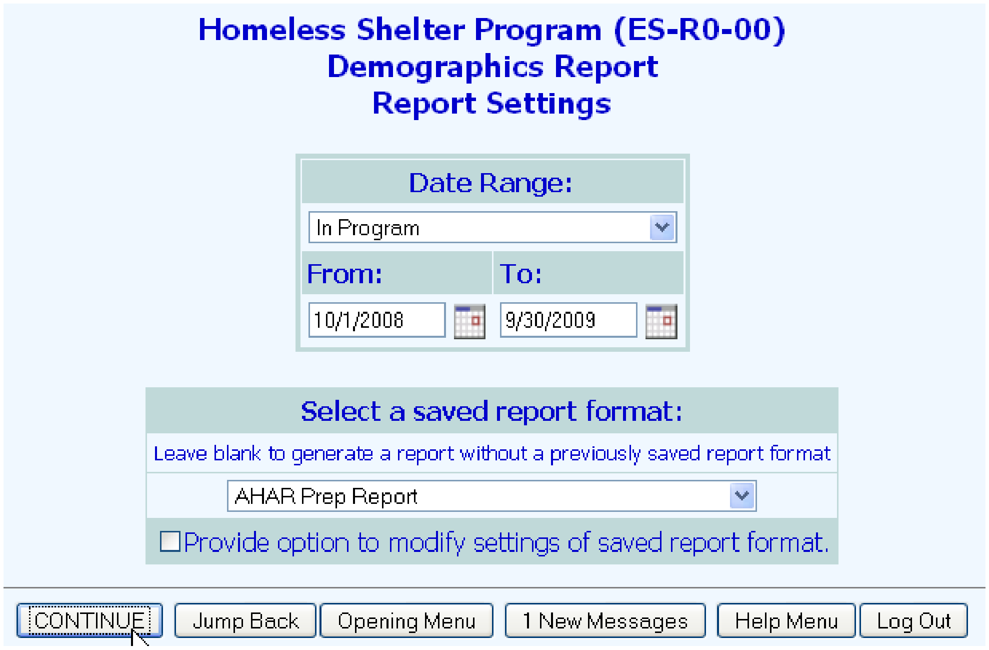
Second, you can use this report to look for duplicate clients. In the example above James Caan was admitted to the program two times, once for a week in October and again starting in May. His name shows up once with two separate lines noting the intake and discharge date of each stay. This is what you should see any time someone has multiple stays in one program. However, if you see James’ name listed two or more times then you know that a duplicate client has been created and they may be counted multiple times on the AHAR Report. There should be just one name per person. Contact the Help Desk if you find duplicate clients and we can merge their records.

Finally, look through the report and make sure the Social Security Number, Date of Birth, Gender, Race, and Ethnicity are correct for all clients. If you find a mistake, you can correct the information by going back to Intake/Admission and pulling up the original intake form and updating any incorrect information.

Print out the Program Profile Report so that you have it for comparison.

The Demographics Report

Let's look at the Demographics Report next. From the Program Profile Report, select your program and click on the button labeled "Demographics Report"



On the settings page, change the date range to 10/1/2008 to 9/30/2009. In the drop down for selecting a saved report format, choose the report format labeled "AHAR Prep Report." Click "Continue" to run that report. The report should then run automatically and all the necessary fields will already be selected. All clients who were in your program between the dates listed will show up on the report along with summary tables at the bottom of the report. The fields that show up on this report are the fields that are looked at in the AHAR Report.

Start by looking at the Individual Details for each client. If you see any missing data, blank spaces, or incorrect information, you will need to go in later and correct that information on the Intake/Admission Screen. Remember that the information presented here should represent how the client looked when they entered your program.

Programs that serve families should pay particular attention to the "Individual/Family Type" column. If someone is marked as being part of a Family then you should make sure the Program Profile Report you printed off shows the name of some household members. This is the easiest way to find conflicts between what was entered at Intake and what was entered on the Household and Child Form.

Any fields that are blank or marked as "Don't Know" or "Refused" will be counted as "Missing This Information" on the AHAR report. While there will be legitimate times when a client does not know some information or refuses to tell you something, these should be few and far between. Whenever possible it's important to be as thorough and accurate on the intake screen. Sometimes you may not learn about a person's disability or other condition until a few weeks into a program, so it is okay to go back and edit the Intake form with any information that you learn over time as long as the condition existed when the person was admitted into your program. In addition, any invalid social security numbers (those that start with "9") or any invalid Zip Codes will affect the not only the data quality of the AHAR but also our score on the NOFA application's Data Quality section.

The Census Report

For programs that serve families there is one more thing to check. The data recorded on the Household and Child form does not show up on the Demographics Report. To check household data you can run the Census Report. The Census Report is found in the "Outcomes" menu. When you run the Census Report make sure and choose the date range 10/1/08 to 9/30/09 and at the bottom of the report settings page, select all the same fields that were selected on the Demographics Report. This report is not as nice and clean as the Demographics Report but you'll be able to see which data is missing or incorrect for Household members.

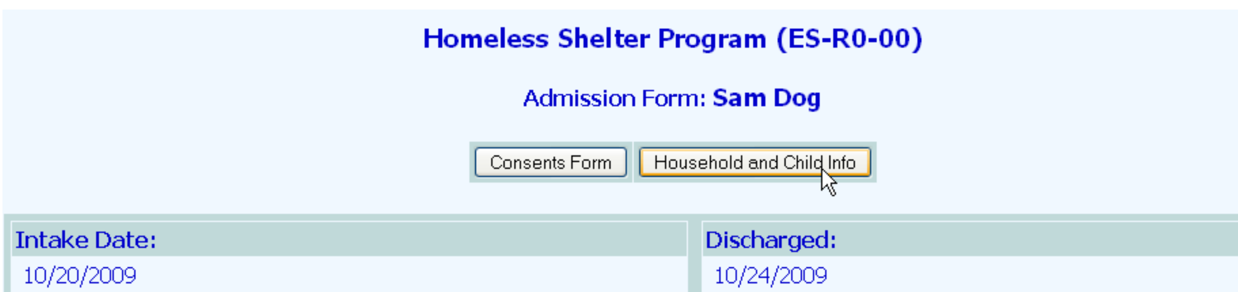
Correcting Information

To correct information that you find missing or incorrect, go back to the Opening Menu and click on "Intake/Admission." Select your program and search for the client whose record you want to correct and then click "Search/Create." On the Referral Search Results page, the client's name should show up in blue. For clients that have been enrolled multiple times, pay attention to the Admission Date and select the entry that you want to edit by clicking on the client's name. If the client has already been discharged you'll be presented with the following question:

Choose the first option ("Edit the demographics fields of this intake record") and hit Continue.

You'll then be presented with the Intake form for that client. Here you can make any corrections that you need. Press "Update Form" at the bottom of the screen to save any changes that you made.

To add or change Household Information click on the "Household and Child Info" button that shows up at the top of the page.



On the Household and Child Info form make sure that all family members including spouses and children are listed. For adults in the household you need to not only fill in all the required fields, but all the non-required fields as well including race, ethnicity, veteran status, residence prior to program entry, disabling condition, and education level. For children make sure their name, gender, date of birth, race and ethnicity are filled in. Double check that the move in and move out dates are accurate. For most family members the move in date will be the first time the family entered any program at your shelter, and the move out date should usually just be left blank. Since this information is part of the Face Sheet the information is shared between all programs at your agency and the dates need to encompass all program stays. The only time the move in or move out dates would be different is if a family member entered a program late or left a program earlier than the rest of the family.

One thing that you will often not be able to change on your own are Intake and Discharge dates for the Head of Household. If you find that a client's intake or discharge date is incorrect and the system will not let you change that information, please send a Help Desk message and we can have Foothold Technology make that change for us. The Help Desk button is found inside the Help Menu, which can be found at the bottom of nearly every page. Please use the Help Desk to send a new message rather than replying to an old message as the Help Desk messages are specially formatted to allow us to send information to Foothold quickly.

If you run into any problems or need help cleaning up your data please contact the HMIS staff and we will be more than happy to help you.

Please visit the AHAR and HMIS page of our website for additional information and resources. http://www.in.gov/ihcda/3120.htm